Audio-gathering Research Project will Improve Inclusion in Engineering Education | College of Engineering

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Sept. 9, 2021 — A Utah State University College of Engineering professor is working to help faculty better understand the experiences of diverse students through an audio-gathering project. Her work is funded through the National Science Foundation.

Engineering education assistant professor Cassandra McCall will be interviewing engineering students from marginalized backgrounds about their educational experiences for a research project. (Matt Jensen/USU)

Cassandra McCall is an assistant professor in the Department of Engineering Education. McCall will be collaborating with Stephen Secules from Florida International University. They will collect audio interviews from undergraduate students who are part of marginalized groups. Edited transcripts of these interviews will be read by voice actors and disseminated among engineering faculty around the nation. The goal is to help educators better serve students from underrepresented groups.

“In my own undergraduate experience, I never saw myself as someone who fully belonged,” McCall said. “I felt like I was different for reasons like, I was told I was too outgoing and talkative to be an engineer. Just being a woman in engineering was something I was always aware of, being different from the majority of my peers.”

McCall hopes the recorded narratives will invite faculty into broader conversations about what diversity, equity and inclusion look like in engineering education.

Twenty engineering students from around the United States will be interviewed for this project. Once the interviews have been edited and re-recorded by voice actors, they will be disseminated to 100 engineering faculty members along with a survey to gain feedback on how the narratives influenced their perception of diversity and inclusion. The final audio products will be available online.

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